



News Release

For Immediate Release:

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Department of Workforce Development to Focus on Indiana Small Businesses *February Designated As "Small Business Month"*

INDIANAPOLIS (Jan. 30, 2006) -- As a result of a successful effort undertaken in November of 2005, the Indiana Department of Workforce Development has designated February, 2006 as Small Business Month and will contact at least 1,000 small businesses throughout the month promoting its training grants and other services it offers to Indiana companies with less than 100 employees

"Small businesses in Indiana are becoming more and more important to our economic future," said Ron Stiver, Commissioner of the Department of Workforce Development. "More than 315,000 Hoosiers work for employers with one to nine employees, and the median employer size in the state is five employees. Clearly, we will not be able to succeed toward our goals of growing income and jobs unless we support the growth of entrepreneurship and small business. Seventy percent of the new jobs in the United States come from small businesses."

"With these kinds of numbers, it is important that our state programs and services be more attuned to the small business community as well as their unique business needs," Stiver said. "We hope that our blitzes will help raise awareness among the small business community that the Daniels administration views as critical to our economic success."

As it did in November, the department's business consultants will make a special blitz throughout Indiana during February, calling on small businesses and making them more acquainted with the Training Acceleration Grant program and network of WorkOne Centers which can provide job matching, recruiting, training and transition support services for employers of all sizes. Department officials will call on at least 100 small companies in each of the state's eleven economic growth regions.

"We intend to reach more than 1,000 companies throughout the month to promote our services and programs. We also hope that the meetings will result in new Training Acceleration Grant and WorkKeys applications. It is our belief that over time, we will see a growth in jobs and economic activity among many of these companies as a direct result of these efforts," Stiver said.

Stiver said that as a result of the Department of Workforce Development's efforts in November, a total of \$260,400 has been awarded to eight Indiana small businesses in training acceleration grants. The department also provided WorkKeys assessments at three companies. Department officials met personally with representatives from 115 companies, and 17 seminars were held.

Department officials will also provide small businesses with information on the Work Opportunity Training Credit, a federal tax credit program that provides incentives to companies who hire individuals who have difficulty in securing and retaining employment.

The Department is also promoting its new WorkEthic program, a pilot program which measures work readiness among high school students by identifying skills needed for success. This program emphasizes skills identified as important factors in hiring and retaining successful employees within a company.

"Students who have received WorkEthic certification may be of value to small businesses just as they would any size business," Stiver said. "These are students who have shown to be particularly adept at succeeding in the workplace."

Stiver noted that wage growth among Indiana businesses with fewer than ten employees from 1994-2004 grew at a faster rate than employers of more than 2,000 employees. Employment grew at these firms by 3.4 percent during this time, compared with a minus 12.8 growth rate of companies with greater than 2000 employees.

The Training Acceleration Grant program is specifically designed to help small businesses grow and retain their workforce. The program has a sliding match scale to give small businesses additional incentives for investing in a skilled workforce and come with a simple, streamlined application process, with regional assistance available throughout the grant writing process.

WorkKeys is an initiative designed to help employers through job assessment tools, analysis and training mechanisms. WorkKeys helps businesses find and retain employees, assists employees in the development of long-term career paths and promotes identification of core skills needed for employment success.

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development is charged with continually improving the Hoosier workforce by assisting companies to create new jobs and improve worker skills. The agency offers a variety of training and educational grants, partners with Indiana's 26 WorkOne Centers, administers the unemployment insurance system, provides labor market information, assists employers with preparing workers for layoffs and closures and operates a statewide job placement service. For more information contact DWD at 1-888-WorkOne, or visit the website at www.workforce.IN.gov.